



Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of March 14, 2024

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** March 8, 2024
From: Councillor Krista Loughton and Councillor Dave Thompson
Subject: Community Safety and Connection for Caledonia Place

BACKGROUND

There is an overconcentration of support services for the unhoused in Victoria. More specifically, most of these services are in North Park, Burnside Gorge, and Downtown, which causes significant issues for the housed neighbours and the unhoused residents. Services for the unhoused need to be distributed throughout the region, with each municipality doing its share, but until that happens, we desperately need innovative and effective solutions to help people in the neighbourhoods most affected by sheltering and supportive housing.

This motion aims to test viable solutions and establish a collaborative working group for the residents and operator (Our Place Society) of Caledonia Place and the neighbouring community in North Park. The objective is to minimize harm to both housed and unhoused individuals and to generate employment opportunities for those who are experiencing homelessness.

THE VILLAGE

The Village in Duncan, B.C., is an excellent example of creating a safer neighbourhood by implementing practical, thoughtful solutions. When The Village began, the neighbourhood resisted it, including a petition with several hundred signatures. A year later, the crime rate dropped by 18% compared to before The Village opened, and the neighbourhood was more favourable to the tiny home community.

Initially, there was security at the site, but staff eventually found it unnecessary as they did hourly rounds within a 150m radius of the site. This created community connection between the staff, residents, and neighbours and acted as a deterrent to petty crime and people rifling through yards.

Additionally, a peer-to-peer outreach project was started to offer employment to the residents of The Village, and 80% of the residents participated in this work. They do peer outreach for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the neighbourhood. This continued relationship building in the neighbourhood and increased capacity to respond to situations as soon as they arise by working with the neighbours promptly. The combination of the hourly rounds, the peer outreach, and an active and collaborative community advisory committee are said to have influenced the

lowering of the crime rate in the neighbourhood by 18% within a year of the site opening, and some of the housed neighbours now volunteer at The Village.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION AND OPPORTUNITIES IN NORTH PARK

The Village example worked as it was created specifically for their community, so it is not guaranteed to work in North Park's context. However, it is worth using their success as inspiration to explore ways to reduce harm around shelters and supportive housing sites in Victoria. Since Caledonia Place is set to open soon, it is logical to pilot ideas to improve the second iteration of the tiny home community and respond to concerns raised by some of the neighbours.

To start, it is essential to set up a system for the Caledonia Place residents, Our Place Society (OPS), the North Park Neighbourhood Association (NPNA), and the housed neighbours to brainstorm and pilot solutions based on their neighbourhoods' needs.

Practical suggestions for pilot projects include:

- Set up a street ambassador program where members of the unhoused community do regular block walks to discourage congregation on the street, disorder, and petty theft. This could deter people from rummaging through backyards around Caledonia Place and improve community safety and well-being in this area of North Park.
- Set up a day labour-type program designed specifically for the unhoused community as an opportunity for work. This could include a clean team, like DVBA's successful Downtown Clean Team, which OPS has already indicated as an option.
- Set up a peer-to-peer outreach program like The Village example and explore support from Work B.C. to do so.

OPS is actively working on social enterprise employment opportunities for the unhoused and creating recovery environments to support people who have mental health and addiction challenges.

Connecting the community positively to work together on solutions is a proactive step to lessening the harm for everyone involved and creating a safer community.

Strategic Plan Alignment

This motion supports two items under Community Well-being and Safety in the 2023-26 Strategic Plan:

- Support innovative, well-being solutions to reduce harm for housed and unhoused people living in neighbourhoods where there are shelters.
- Work with partner agencies and governments to create life opportunities for unhoused people.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council directs staff to:

- Request that OPS do regular safety checks and block watch in the vicinity of Caledonia Place and ensure there is strong collaboration between OPS, bylaw, and police to mitigate any potential community safety issues;
- Reach out to OPS and the NPNA to encourage the creation of a pilot project(s) to provide work opportunities for interested Caledonia Place residents and people experiencing homelessness in the neighbourhood, potentially via Work BC;
- Request that OPS set up a Residents' Advisory Committee (RAC) at Caledonia Place;
- Request that OPS, the NPNA, and Caledonia Place's RAC sets up a Community Working Group to brainstorm and implement solutions to improve community safety and well-being for the neighbourhood, including the establishment of a conflict resolution strategy;
- Allocate up to \$50,000 as a grant to OPS by reallocating from the Social Policy, Accessibility, and Equity Pilot Grant 2024 budget for the above work;
- Forward this motion to the daytime Council meeting on March 14, 2024, for Council consideration.



Coun. Krista Loughton



Coun. Dave Thompson